



GOVERNMENT'S MILLIONS FROM HOMES PLANS

Big cash windfall
from housing
scheme which
sparked outcry



A CONTROVERSIAL housing development in the heart of Wickford will net the Government millions of pounds.

Land at Barn Hall was sold to developers for just £150,000 in 2003, with a clause in the contract stating the Government would receive 85 per cent of any future profits.

Following a community battle to preserve the site, a development of 200 homes was finally approved after

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a Government public inquiry last October.

MP John Baron said: "The whole community was against this.

"The Secretary of State's decision made little sense at the time, but this now perhaps explains it."

Peter Baynes, of Wickford North Green Action Group, added: "I'm horrified to learn of the extent to which the Government will benefit."

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■ Horrified - resident Peter Boynes and wife Jacqueline

Picture: AL UNDERWOOD

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TOMORROW

Going for Broke with a new sound



SOUNDCHECK

Rampaging joyriders' mayhem at golf course

By GINA MARDEN
Crime reporter
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JOYRIDING yobs trashed a golf course hours before a major county-wide competition.

Now the owners of St Cleres golf club are installing live web cams so they can watch the grounds 24 hours a day.

Robert Lyon, 49, who owns the course in London Road, Stanford-le-Hope, with brother John and brother-in-law Mike Valenti, said: "We have had things like this done before, but never with a stolen car and never so severely."

"Now we are going to have the web cam put in place so we can all see the course from home and if anyone goes on to the course again we can call police straight away."

"Our green staff worked around the clock to get the course back in shape, but when they arrived the damage was horrific."

The joyriders drove their car on to the course through a nearby field. They then went on the rampage, driving the stolen vehicle at speed across greens.

The turf was torn up, causing nearly £2,000 damage, while benches, trees and bins were also knocked over.

During their antics the windscreen of the crooks' car smashed all over the course and its bumper and number plate were also ripped off.

The thugs then smashed through a gate at St Cleres to make their getaway.

Mr Lyon said it was only thanks to his staff, who worked through Saturday day and night, that the Thornton Cup was able to go ahead.

Police have launched an investigation into the incident, which happened between Friday evening and the early hours of Saturday morning, and are appealing for witnesses.



■ Smashed up – greenkeepers Ian Crump and Matthew Parks with a smashed sign, bench, and part of the stolen car that was left behind
Picture: ANNA LUKALA SLBTM4

Time is running out for travellers

THE COUNTDOWN to illegal traveller site evictions has begun.

In just over seven days Basildon Council will publicly advertise for bailiff companies interested in winning the around £2million contract to clear 86 families from Dale Farm at Crays Hill and Hovefields, Wickford.

Due to the scale of the contract it has to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union to allow all firms across the Continent to apply.

Firm favourites remain UK-based traveller eviction specialist Constant & Co.

Bryan Lecocq, a director of the company which carried out previous evictions at Hovefields, said: "I can confirm we will be making an application."

Tony Ball, council leader, said: "The advert will be published next week. We are then looking at about two months to award the contract, before any families still at the site are served 28-day notices of eviction. We hope in the meantime they will move off peacefully."

However, campaigners for the travellers still hope to stall the process.

Campaign leader Grattan Puxon said: "Our lawyer Keith Lomax has been through the Court of Appeal decision and believes it is clear the council must re-take its decision to evict at the development control committee. We also believe the judges said there should be alternative homes before an eviction."

Further private talks between travellers and council officers to discuss this and other issues are being set for this or next month.

Where to find it

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